

Code of Welfare: Commercial Slaughter 2016, Minimum Standards (Part 7): Slaughter Outside of Slaughter Premises by Homekill Service Providers and Pet Food Operators

A code of welfare issued under the Animal Welfare Act 1999, 15 December 2016

Only minimum standards relevant to pigs in Part 7 of the Commercial Slaughter Code are included

Introduction

Those minimum standards in this code that are relevant apply equally to all animals killed outside of slaughter premises (e.g. on the farm) by a homekill service provider or a pet food operator (hereafter called homekill operators). However, the circumstances for slaughter are likely to vary from site to site and there may be some uncertainty as to when the obligations of the owner or person in charge as defined in the Animal Welfare Act are transferred to the homekill operator.

In being contracted to provide the service, the homekill operator assumes the responsibility and obligations of the person in charge for the stunning and slaughter processes provided for in this code. Up to the point of slaughter, the owner or person in charge of the animal and, depending on circumstances, the homekill operator are responsible for the welfare of the animals. The homekill operator should give clear directions to the owner or person in charge of the animal, or their employee, regarding the form and degree of restraint of the animals they require before undertaking the stunning and slaughter processes and assuming responsibility for the welfare of the animals. The homekill operator should decline to proceed with the stunning and slaughter processes until their requirements have been met.

Minimum Standard No. 2: Competence of Stunning and Slaughter Personnel

- (a) Animals must be killed either:
 - i) by a person competent in the handling and slaughter of that species; or
 - ii) when untrained personnel are carrying out stunning and/or bleeding out under the direct supervision of a person competent in the handling and slaughter of that species.
- (b) Personnel must be trained to perform the stunning and bleeding out procedures correctly, and trained in the method of applying the apparatus.
- (c) Stunning and slaughter personnel must be trained to recognise the signs associated with both an effective and an ineffective stun, and must take action to ensure that any animal that receives an ineffective stun is immediately rendered unconscious.

Minimum Standard No. 3: Facilities for Large Mammals

- (b) All animal handling facilities must be operated so that they do not result in injury to animals.
- (d) Facilities where animals are held for more than 4 hours must allow all animals to move freely, stand up and lie down.
- (e) One-way gates and other devices situated in races or ramps to prevent an animal going backwards, must be designed and operated so that they do not trap animals, lead to injury or cause the operator to apply undue pressure on animals to force them to pass through the gate or device.
- (f) The design and slope of ramps must be such as to minimise animals skidding or becoming distressed or injured.

Minimum Standard No. 4: Handling of Large Mammals

- (a) Animals must be handled and moved in such a manner as to minimise distress.
- (b) Different species of animals must not be mixed.
- (c) Horned cattle and animals known to be aggressive must be penned separately if there is insufficient space for pen-mates to escape injury.
- (d) If problems of aggressive behaviour occur, the animals must be held separately and/or slaughtered as soon as practicable.
- (f) Personnel inspecting animals must be competent at recognising normal and abnormal behaviour that indicates distress or suffering due to injury, disease, physiological state or other abnormality.
- (g) Animals that are unable to stand or bear weight and walk on all four entire limbs must be slaughtered as soon as possible in the situation in which they are found (as distinct from taking them to a slaughtering site) using a humane slaughter method.
- (t) Goats must not be used to move animals, except:
 - i) where the safety of the handler is at risk;
 - ii) when loading a stunning pen;
- (u) Animals must not be prodded in the most sensitive areas including the head, udder, anus, vulva or scrotum.
- (v) Animals which are injured, suffering or otherwise unfit for further transport (except newborn animals) must be slaughtered or humanely killed at the slaughter premises.

Minimum Standard No. 5: Restraint for Stunning of Large Mammals

- (a) Animals must be presented for stunning in a manner that allows effective stunning.
- (b) A restraining device must be used if the natural behaviour of the animal and the system of handling do not allow the accurate application of the stunning equipment.
- (c) The restraining device must be designed and used in a way that avoids excessive stress to the animal.
- (f) Large mammals may be killed by homekill service providers and pet food operators using a firearm.
- (j) All stunning restraint facilities must be regularly inspected and well maintained.

Minimum Standard No. 6: Stunning of Large Mammals

- (a) Prior to slaughter, all animals must be stunned so that they are immediately rendered insensible and must be maintained in that state until death supervenes. This includes a method of stunning that results in immediate insensibility and death.
- (b) Stunning must be applied using one of the following:
 - i) a captive bolt firearm; or
 - ii) an electrical stunner; or
 - iii) a suitable firearm.
- (c) Equipment used for stunning must be maintained in good condition in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations.
- (d) An effective backup stun method must be immediately available in the event that the primary apparatus fails.
- (e) Repetitive ineffective stunning requiring repeat stunning must be investigated and remedied immediately.

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Minimum Standard No. 7: Use of Captive Bolt Firearm for Large Mammals

- (a) When a captive bolt firearm is used, the appropriate model, calibre and cartridge size as recommended by the manufacturer must be selected for the particular animal.
- (b) The target must be as shown in Schedule I - Captive Bolt and Free-bullet Firearm Stunning Sites, to this code.
- (c) Animals must be effectively stunned and insensible (in accordance with the signs of an effective stun as set out in Schedule II - Signs of an Effective Stun in Farmed Mammals, to this code) before the slaughter process can begin.
- (d) A captive bolt firearm must be cleaned and maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions to ensure that it functions effectively.

Minimum Standard No. 9: Use of Firearms for Large Mammals

- (a) When a free-bullet firearm is used, it must be of a calibre and range appropriate for the particular species and class of animal.
- (b) The target must be as shown in Schedule I - Captive Bolt and Free-bullet Firearm Stunning Sites, to this code.
- (c) When a firearm is used, the bullet or shot must penetrate the cranial cavity to cause an irreversible state of insensibility before the slaughter process can begin.
- (d) A firearm must be cleaned and maintained to ensure that it functions effectively.

Minimum Standard No. 10: Stunning to Bleeding Out of Large Mammals

- (a) An animal must not be bled or manipulated ready for bleeding out unless it has been effectively stunned.
- (b) The time between stunning and effective bleeding out must be kept to a minimum in all cases.
- (c) Slaughter by bleeding (following stunning) must be carried out using one of the following methods:
 - i) the thoracic stick, i.e. the severance of the major arterial and venous blood vessels of the anterior thorax; or
 - ii) a transverse incision in the neck that severs both the carotid arteries.
- (f) If during the bleeding out process any animal shows signs of regaining sensibility, the stunning and slaughter of other animals must stop immediately and the animal that is showing signs of regaining sensibility must be rendered insensible. No further animals may be stunned until the reason is identified and corrective action, including action to prevent a recurrence, implemented.
- (g) The sticking incision must be adequate to allow rapid voiding of the blood and to prevent occlusion of blood flow during bleeding out.
- (h) In the case of heavily pregnant animals being slaughtered, the foetus must not be removed from the uterus sooner than 5 minutes after the maternal neck cut or thoracic stick.
- (i) Any living foetus removed from the uterus must be killed or prevented from inflating its lungs with air and breathing.